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Glenbow show inspired author

By Kenneth McGoogan
(Herald staff writer)

Five years ago, while checking out the native Canadian exhibition at the Glenbow Museum, fiction writer Joan Clark was arrested by a collection of Iroquois masks.

"These masks were used by the false-face society," she told about 100 Calgary school children Friday.

They were a group of Indians, she said, who believed that "if you wore these masks, you could drive out evil spirits."

Clark was describing where she got the idea for her sixth book, *Wild Man of the Woods* (Penguin, 171 pages, $14.95).

The children, students in grades five and six, had come to Sandcastles bookstore from three schools: West Dover, Earl Grey and Cliff Bungalow.

Clark read passages from her new work, her fifth for children, while two actors dressed in costumes from the recent Rockies extravanganza, *Princess of the Stars,* evoked the mood of the novel.

Wild Man of the Woods focuses on a young Calgary boy named Stephen who visits his cousin Louie in the Rockies.

The boys go canoeing, camping and swimming, but their holiday is spoiled by two bullies who play increasingly cruel tricks on them.

Stephen and Louie fight back.

This mini-war escalates, and the boys discover that donning animal masks carved by a giant local Indian gives them extraordinary courage.

But when Stephen puts on the mask of the Wild Man of the Woods, things get out of hand.

Clark, a past president of the Writers' Guild of Alberta, lived in Bragg Creek until last summer, when she moved to Newfoundland.

She said the setting of *Wild Man* is based loosely on the area around Lake Lillian, near Invermere, where she and her husband own a cabin. "Eventually, we hope to live there."

Clark said she has finished a companion novel to *Wild Man* called *Moons of Madeleine.* It focuses on Louie's sister, who takes a moon mask into Calgary at the same time as Stephen visits.

Both these novels are informed, she said, by a long-standing interest in the way children aged 10 to 12 handle their sexuality: "Girls play with girls and boys with boys."

Clark, the mother of two sons and a daughter, has been writing children's books for almost 20 years. Her works include *The Hand of Robin Squires* and *The Leopard and the Lily.*

Clark was a founding editor of Calgary's *Dandelion* magazine, and has published a collection of short stories for adults called *From A High Thin Wire.*

Shannon Oatway, Calgary Herald

Joan Clark reads from her latest book

Stage West play to be ended early

By Bob Blakey
(Herald staff writer)

Stage West has discovered once again that a play about alcoholism doesn't mix well with the cocktail-lounge atmosphere of dinner theatre.

The organization is pulling one of its plays in the middle of a scheduled run because of audience response to the theme.

The Gingerbread Lady, a play about an aging alcoholic, will wind up Oct. 20 — four weeks earlier than planned — and be replaced by another production.

"It wasn't the kind of play Stage West was known for," Edmonton-based producer Howard Pechet said Friday.

"Our audience was anticipating one thing and getting another."

Stage West staff in Calgary discovered that patrons expected something humorous from the play's star, Isabel Sandford of *The Jeffersons* television show.

This wasn't the first trouble Stage West has had with *The Gingerbread Lady.* When the company's Edmonton operation set up business in 1975, it opened with the play. Pechet discovered on that occasion, too, that alcoholism wasn't the best entertainment subject for an operation counting on selling a lot of drinks.

"I told stories for years about how I picked the wrong play. And here, 11 years later, I go and produce the same play.

"So it shows me what history has taught me over 11 years. I haven't learned a heck of a lot."

Pechet said he has decided on numerous occasions to abbreviate a play's run.

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October 22 and 23, 8:00 p.m.
also at
The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts
Eric Harvie Theatre
October 26, 8:00 p.m.
Tickets at Banff 762-6300 or Calgary 236-1938

Russell nears end

MONTREAL (CP) — Twenty-three months after kicking off her farewell tour, Anna Russell — the merry prankster of serious music — is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Next May, she says, is when she's finally going to retire to her beloved garden in Unionville, Ont., after more than 30 years of poking fun at German leider, French chansons, Irish harps, bagpipes and a English folk melody that you can oink along to.

"That's it. That's all. Finished," vowed the bubbly Russell recently.

"If they don't get (to see the show) before May, it's not on."

Russell is 74 and looks 20 years younger than that. She has been vowing to call it quits since 1965, but a loyal following of fans worldwide and steady sales of her records has kept her going.

Her show here drew on her most popular routines, including a comic dissection of Wagner's grandoise spectacle *The Ring,* her famous do-it-yourself Gilbert and Sullivan opera and the aforementioned English folk tune in which Russell invites the audience to contribute its barnyard chorus.

The current tour — which stops in Calgary Nov. 22 — began in November 1983. So far it's included New York, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Bermuda "and all places in between" and has yet to hit Florida, Texas, Australia and wherever else her New York booking agent gets invitations from.

"I had no idea it was going to last this long. I started — well, it will be two years in November. I started in San Francisco. But then of course it got announced (and) every place I've ever been to joined onto the end of (the itinerary)."

The haphazard way the farewell tour evolved refects the way Russell got into musical comedy in the first place.

"Every time I did something (while singing at the BBC), even though I was being very serious, everyone would laugh and scream. I used to get offended.

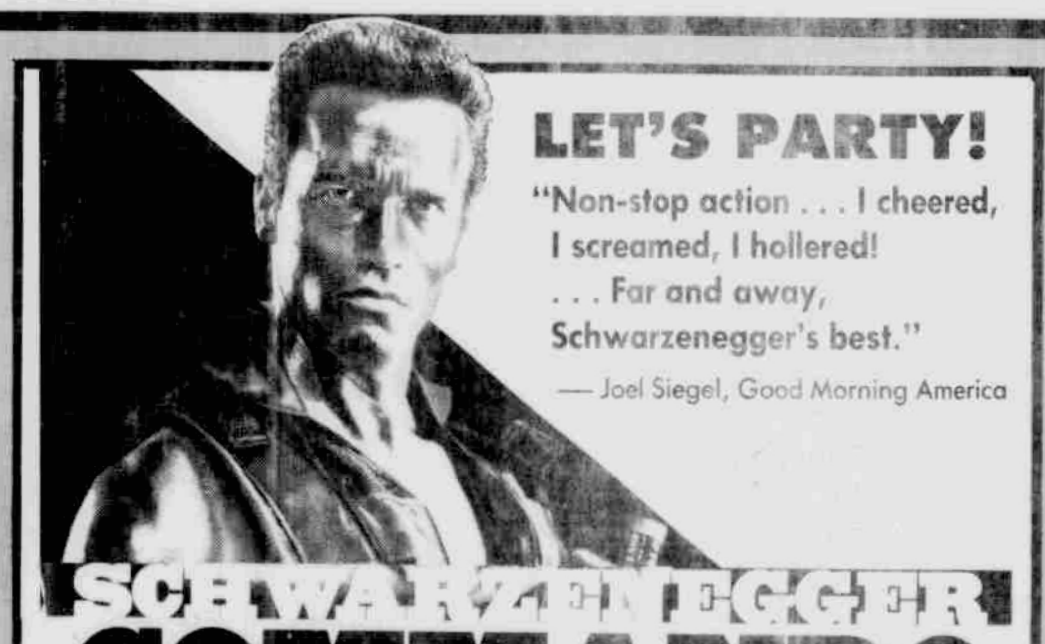
"Finally I thought that if people were going to laugh anyway, I might as well go along with the gang. So I did."

Art critic to lecture

Art critic, curator and administrator Rene Blouin will lecture on *Aurora Borealis,* the major Montreal exhibition of new Canadian art, tonight at Off Centre Centre at 8 p.m.

Blouin was one of three curators, with Norman Theriault and Claude Gosselin, who curated the huge show of installation works by 31 of the country's leading contemporary artists.

Off Centre Centre is located at 118 8th Ave. S.W. (third floor). For more information, call 233-2399.



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